

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

February 19, 2002
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Marshall, Deputy Mayor Degginger, Councilmembers Creighton, Davidson, Lee, and Noble

ABSENT: Councilmember Mosher

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Degginger opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m. and announced recess to executive session for approximately 30 minutes to discuss one item of potential property acquisition and one item of labor negotiations. At 6:42 p.m., the meeting resumed with Mayor Marshall presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Downtown Implementation Plan Update

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened the discussion about the ongoing Downtown Implementation Plan update process.

Dan Stroh, Planning Division Director, said the 46-member Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) for this project has been meeting for approximately one year. The downtown planning process contains three major elements:

- Update of the Downtown Implementation Plan, which focuses on the infrastructure improvements needed to support downtown's growth.
- Fire and life safety planning to meet downtown's needs.
- Review of Downtown Subarea Plan, which sets the vision for the land use and character of downtown.

Mr. Stroh introduced the principal consultant for the urban design portion of the update, Arlan Collins of Collins Woerman. Mr. Stroh referenced the Project Schedule on page SS 2-3 of the Council packet and noted that the update process is approximately two-thirds completed. Transportation projects have been identified to meet the downtown's potential needs and the project team is working with the CAC to identify urban design strategies. Staff's review of the Downtown Subarea Plan was initiated last spring and the project is approaching the critical point in the process, the formation of the Hybrid Alternative. The Hybrid Alternative will integrate

transportation and urban design solutions, which will then be reviewed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analysis. The project team is working to prepare the Hybrid Alternative by the end of March.

Kris Liljeblad, Transportation Assistant Director, said the 2020 forecast for downtown indicates a concentration of 75 percent of the city's future commercial development. Therefore, transportation investments are needed in order to avoid gridlock on downtown streets. Mr. Liljeblad said I-405 improvements, including the addition of half-interchanges at NE 2nd Street and NE 10th Street, are probably the most critical element recommended by the consultant. Enhanced transit services will also be an important part of any downtown transportation solution.

Mr. Liljeblad reviewed recommended roadway projects for the Hybrid Alternative analysis including half-interchanges at NE 2nd and 10th Streets, widening of NE 2nd Street from I-405 to Bellevue Way, the conversion of 106th and 108th Avenues to one-way streets, and widening Bellevue Way. A full list is provided on page SS 2-36 of the Council packet. Two projects recommended by the consultant for further analysis are the extension of 120th Avenue NE and the implementation of high-capacity transit. Mr. Liljeblad briefly noted some of the projects considered but not recommended for inclusion in the Hybrid Alternative, which are also listed on page SS 2-36.

Responding to Mayor Marshall, Mr. Liljeblad said all projects under consideration, including those not recommended by the consultant, will be analyzed in the EIS review. The projects are grouped as follows:

- Major Roadway package,
- Major Transit package,
- Parking Intercept package.

Mr. Liljeblad said the Hybrid Alternative will be studied in more detail than the other projects. However, the EIS analysis will provide further information regarding each potential project.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Mr. Liljeblad said the mid-block connections are envisioned as alleyways to provide access to internal areas such as parking garages and off-street truck loading, with some general pedestrian access as well. Dr. Davidson questioned the feasibility of one-way streets with downtown's super blocks. Mr. Liljeblad acknowledged that one-way streets could be inconvenient for drivers who might need to circle a block. He said 106th and 108th Avenues are considered good candidates for one-way streets because they contain primarily offices rather than retail destinations, and the daily occupants of these buildings would be more familiar with downtown streets than shoppers and other visitors.

In response to Mr. Lee, Mr. Liljeblad said Council and the commissions will have a role in selecting a recommended plan. Once the Hybrid Alternative is developed through the CAC, community input will be solicited through the Draft EIS process. Mr. Stroh referenced the project schedule and added that after projects are ultimately selected by Council, the projects will go through the normal process for adoption into the City's Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP)

and the Capital Investment Program (CIP) Plan. He noted the planning horizon extends over the next 20 years.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Transportation Director Goran Sparrman said the Access Downtown project is a set of projects formulated during the last planning effort approximately 18 years ago. Results of the current downtown planning update represent the next layer of infrastructure improvements to further enhance the transportation system. Mr. Lee expressed concern and frustration about continual transportation improvements in the coming decades.

Noting that three Councilmembers serve on the CAC, Mayor Marshall requested briefings for the Councilmembers not actively involved in the planning effort.

Mr. Creighton, CAC Co-Chair, said the CAC understands that the transportation and livability elements must fit together. He said the consultant pointed out that Bellevue's downtown streets have approximately 40 percent less surface area than the average city due to the super block design, which adds to the challenge of moving people around within the community.

Mr. Lee feels it is important to look at technology options, such as elevated transit, to address transportation needs rather than focusing too heavily on adding car lanes.

Moving on, Mr. Stroh said the Urban Design Task Group, a subcommittee of the CAC, has been working to assess desirable urban design elements.

Mr. Collins observed that Bellevue's super blocks represent "walkable" increments of 1,200 to 1,300 feet, or the distance that the average person will walk before turning around. He further observed that Bellevue's addresses tend to line up north to south rather than east to west, yet all of the access points off the freeway run east-west. Mr. Collins noted that Bellevue is currently somewhat divided between the mall area and the freeway area, and he will discuss ideas for bringing the community together.

Mr. Collins explained that as a city develops infrastructure and becomes viable as a place, the next objective is to become livable. Once a city becomes urban, planning must focus on balancing the negative aspects of an urban environment with elements that make the community a desirable place. After a city becomes livable, the next goal is to become memorable.

Mr. Collins said when the consultants became involved in urban planning for the City of Bellevue, they convened a series of meetings with four groups of people to determine what works for Bellevue, what doesn't work, how they would define success in 2020, and the major obstacles to achieving success. The four groups were selected according to these four districts:

- NOMA – North of the Mall
- Central core
- Old Bellevue
- East Main Street

There was an overlap of stakeholders in all of the group meetings. Mr. Collins noted that of the comments generated, 297 dealt with livability, 97 addressed viability, and 43 were about memorability. Impediments identified by the groups fall primarily into the category of viability

including infrastructure, access, and parking. Comments regarding the definition of success in 2020 reflect livability issues almost exclusively.

Mr. Collins observed that Bellevue is making the transition from viability to livability. He described livability as knitting together a fabric by providing amenities and unifying elements throughout the community.

Mr. Collins presented five concepts for Bellevue's consideration in order to move forward with its urban plan:

1. Downtown Bellevue needs an urban strategy. To continue to be competitive, Downtown Bellevue must evolve into the preeminent urban center of the Eastside.
2. Downtown Bellevue must be a great place. To compete regionally, Downtown Bellevue must begin to positively address its identity and capitalize on its location along Lake Washington's waterfront.
3. The Eastside does not have a center, and Downtown Bellevue must reclaim its role as the symbolic and cultural center of the Eastside.
4. Downtown Bellevue is not a very livable place. It must become a series of unique districts and neighborhoods that capitalize on their local and geographical differences to provide more pedestrian-scaled and diverse urban lifestyle options.
5. Downtown Bellevue is not a memorable place. To remain competitive in the next generation, Downtown Bellevue must become a livable and memorable place. It must become the symbolic and functional heart of the Eastside through the location of cultural, entertainment, and regional uses in distinct neighborhoods connected by infrastructure and inviting public places.

Mr. Stroh noted that the information provided by Mr. Collins was developed in the Urban Design Task Group and will be forwarded for discussion by the full CAC beginning with Thursday's meeting.

Mayor Marshall thanked Mr. Collins for his presentation and agreed with his statement that viability does not happen by accident. Mayor Marshall thanked all of the former City Councils and staff for creating a viable community. She looks forward to the creation of a livable and memorable city.

Mr. Lee said the challenge for Bellevue is in filling the voids and that Councilmembers are motivated to serve because they have a vision for the next 20 to 50 years. He noted that Bellevue has been recognized as one of the top 100 small cities in the country. He praised Bellevue's past leaders and staff for creating and carrying through with the vision. Mr. Lee commented on the importance of stewardship and the manner in which Council shepherds the City's resources to move forward. He wants the Council to be involved in continuing urban planning efforts.

Mr. Noble said he and Mayor Marshall recently participated in a joint meeting of Puget Sound Regional Council's Transportation Board and Growth Management Board. The discussion focused on urban centers, and representatives of the Cities of Everett and Tacoma described public/private development partnerships to make their communities livable and memorable. Mr. Noble feels it is important that Bellevue continue to remain competitive with surrounding cities.

Mayor Marshall thanked Leslie Lloyd and Mr. Creighton for serving as co-chairs of the CAC.

Mr. Lee wished everyone a “Happy Lunar (Chinese) New Year” and noted that he will not be able to attend Council’s regular session later in the evening. In reference to item 8(h) on the regular session agenda, Mr. Lee expressed his support for the proposed jail contracts.

In reference to the Downtown Implementation Plan activities, Mr. Stroh noted there will be ongoing opportunities for public involvement including an event to be scheduled in conjunction with the formation of the Hybrid Alternative.

3. Council Business [Regular Session Agenda Item 6]

Mr. Noble attended a joint meeting of Puget Sound Regional Council’s Transportation Board and Growth Management Board.

Dr. Davidson attended meetings of the Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee, Regional Water Quality Committee, and the Cascade Water Alliance (annual water supply meeting). Dr. Davidson requested that a Bellevue elected official attend the Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee meetings.¹ He noted that Deputy Mayor Degginger was elected to serve as the new Chairman of the Cascade Water Alliance. Dr. Davidson also attended Bellevue Youth Link’s annual Gumbo Night.

Mr. Creighton attended meetings related to the Downtown Implementation Plan Update.

Deputy Mayor Degginger commented on the Cascade Water Alliance meeting in which Governor Locke expressed support for the Lake Tapps project to create a new water supply. Mr. Degginger attended a meeting of the Lake Tapps Task Force.

Mayor Marshall traveled to Washington, D.C., on behalf of the Eastside Transportation Partnership (ETP) to discuss the federal transportation allocation process. The group presented a list of prioritized projects developed by Puget Sound cities, King County, Sound Transit, and the Washington State Department of Transportation. Upon her return to Bellevue, Mrs. Marshall met with U.S. Representative Jennifer Dunn and local officials to further discuss transportation funding.

At 7:53 p.m., Mayor Marshall declared recess to the regular session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

kaw

¹ Amendment approved by consensus of the Council at the March 4, 2002, Regular Session.